

Invisible People (A Radio Opera)

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Invisible People (A Radio Opera) is a series of site-specific performance-compositions confronting queer black identity. The radio opera concept was instigated after hearing John Cage's *The City Wears a Slouch Hat* in the mid-nineties and developed after subsequent years of experience as a composer and sound designer for theatre and radio drama. Composer Anthony Davis challenged me to develop an opera based on a socio-political topic, which drew me to two arenas: the responses from African American communities in reaction to President Obama's announcement in support of marriage equality and blogs contrasting the underreported deaths of Sakia Gunn, Shani Baraka, and Rayshon Holmes to the media coverage devoted to the murders of Matthew Shepard, Brandon Teena, and Gwen Araujo.

The notion to create a linear narrative with *Invisible People* was abandoned early on. The libretto is derived from found texts from a variety of sources including historic speeches, sermons, news articles, and online postings. Its modular and improvisational framework permits the length, order, and meaning to be easily modified thereby rendering a new performance from each iteration. Self-interrogation motivated me to explore how identity could be manifest through sound.

Prologue to Invisible People (A Radio Opera) and *Invisible People (A Radio Opera), Act I, Scene 1* were performed in 2012 as tape pieces intended to be played at an uncomfortable volume in a complete blackout. In Spring 2013, *Invisible People (A Radio Opera), Deliverance: Episode 1* included projection and live trumpet improvisation. All three events were held in the Experimental Theater of the Conrad Prebys Music Center at UC San Diego. Although darkness and silence are integral to the work, Space4Art in San Diego will host the staged premiere of *Invisible People (A Radio Opera)* on September 27, 2013 as part of the Glottalopticon Outdoor Experimental Opera Series.